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Section 773.5 MSP/8-1859

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : American Embassy, Benghazi

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

August 18, 1959
DATE

REF : J.M. Razi 5/6/82

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	AF-5	RM/R-2 ~~Rpt~~ 1 IRC-8 EL/MSC-3 ICA-11
	REC'D 8-22-59	INFO OTHER CIA-10 OSD-4 ARMY-4 NAVY-3 AIR-3

SUBJECT: American Aid for Libyan Communications Projects.

NEA/IA-10

I called on the Minister of Communications at his office at Beida on the morning of August 13. I thought that I was calling at the Minister's request, but from the desultory manner in which the conversation progressed it is possible that he thought I had asked for the appointment. In any event he did not raise the most sensitive, if not the most important issue between us, namely the financing of the Fezzan Road. Whether he expected me to open up this subject or whether he was unable to screw up his courage to the point of broaching the subject himself, neither Mohammed Salah, who acted as my interpreter, nor I, was able to determine.

Nasir Kizza left a Cabinet Meeting to receive me. Although he seemed extremely nervous and ill at ease from beginning to end of the forty-five minute interview, I do not believe it was because of his absence from the Cabinet session. He made a very pleasant, if somewhat forced, speech to me at the beginning about the many projects within his Ministry financed by the Government of the United States and his consequent delight at seeing me to discuss matters of mutual interest. I thanked the Minister for his kind words and expressed my pleasure that the major portion of the telecommunications project, that is, the link between Tripoli and Benghazi, had been completed. While there were still several important tasks to be performed within this project, I felt the most pressing one was that of training Libyans to become technically qualified to take over the operation of this complicated and modern new system. The representative of the American company had reported to me, I added, that some difficulty had arisen over the finding of some suitable accommodations for the training school. There then followed a detailed discussion of this problem in which the Minister reported that he had not been informed of it by his Under Secretary, Mr. Khabazi (who is presently out of Libya to attend a conference and to take leave for a period of a month and a half). He made note of the site which was desired and which I described to him as Aziziyya Barracks, also referred to as "Gialo". The Minister promised that he would look into this matter immediately and would give me a report on it some time within the next week or ten days.

Mr. Kizza said that his Ministry employs thousands of laborers on projects financed by American aid, such as maintenance work on the coastal road and on that portion of the Fezzan Road which is not under construction. He added that some eight hundred laborers are employed on the former, and approximately one thousand laborers on the latter; that all know that they are paid through U.S. assistance funds.

JWJones/MSalah/grr
REPORTER

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NEA/IA 1959

The Minister expressed his personal appreciation for the recent shipments of gift grain (under Title II, PL 480), to relieve the near-tragic situation caused by this year's drought. I expressed my gratification that we Americans had been able to help at a time of disaster and asked whether the newly arrived grain had been distributed throughout the area in time to be effective. I made some reference to the Minister's own tribal area near Solluq, which I knew had particularly suffered from the drought. The Minister implied that there had been some difficulties in internal distribution with which he was not entirely satisfied, but he quickly added that this was a Libyan problem and no responsibility of the Americans who had landed their wheat at Libyan ports with gratifying promptness. He said that all Libyans realized that this gift wheat came from the people of the United States of America. The Minister concluded that he considered himself a true friend of the United States and that it was his aim to assure that friendly ties between the Libyan and American Governments were further strengthened.

J. Wesley Jones

cc Amembassy, Tripoli (2)